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ABSTRACT

The practicum reported here was designed to increase middle school students' participation in and use of the school library programs and resources. BookTalks, Read Alouds, a special service project, and three all-school programs were accomplished in this independent school setting during a three-month period. Middle school students were encouraged to read more and the habit of reading was promoted. BookTalk and Read Aloud strategies combining a wide array of books and curious correlating objects were developed; coordinated BookTalks and Read Alouds were presented by the parent and visiting county librarian; weekly service projects of reading aloud by seventh graders to the kindergarten class were organized and supervised; and three all-school events were designed, arranged, and carried out with the assistance and cooperation of teachers and parents. Analysis of the circulation data revealed that students were apt to check out books that were reviewed or excerpted during the sessions. Overall, participating students showed an added interest in the featured books, and an enthusiasm for reading to the younger children while increasing their visits to the library. (A figure listing strategies to encourage reading, a figure listing middle school considerations for instructions, and a figure of data are included; four appendixes providing goals and objectives, the lesson plan format for BookTalks, calendar plans for BookTalks/Read Alouds, a general action plan for library programs, a discussion of special programs, and a calendar plan for the service project are attached.) (Author/RS)

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BookTalks/Read Alouds, Special Programs, and Service Projects To Encourage Middle School Student Participation in the Library

by

Eleanor Crowther

Cluster 51

A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL

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Approved:

Aug. 29, 1993
Date of Final Approval of Report

William W. Anderson
William W. Anderson, Ed. D.

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Abstract

BookTalks/Read Alouds, Special Programs, and Service Projects Encourage Middle School Student Participation in the Library. Crowther, D. Eleanor, 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Reading/Elementary/Middle School/Independent School Library/Language Arts.

This practicum was designed to increase middle school students' (grades 6, 7, 8) participation in and use of the school library programs and resources. BookTalks, Read Alouds, a special service project, and three all-school programs were accomplished in this independent school setting during ta three month period. Middle school students were encouraged to read more and the habit of reading was promoted.

The writer developed BookTalk and Read Aloud strategies combining a wide array of books and curious correlating objects; coordinated BookTalks and Read Alouds presented by the parent and visiting county librarian; organized and supervised the weekly service project of reading aloud by seventh graders to the kindergarten class; designed, arranged and carried out three all-school events with the assistance and cooperation of teachers nd parents.

Analysis of the circulation data revealed that students were apt to check out books that were reviewed or excerpted during the sessions. Overall, participating students showed an added interest in the featured books, and an enthusiasm for reading to the younger children while increasing their visits to the library.

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do give permission to Nova University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfisching, handling, and mailing of the materials.

October 15, 1993 — D. Eleanor Crockett

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

This accredited coeducational, independent school is located in a suburban east coast community. The community, with a population of about 12,300, is the county seat with a total county population of approximately 86, 000. The community is surrounded by historic towns, quaint villages, and scenic countryside in view of three mountain ranges. Large family farms are giving way to diversified uses such as tree farms, vineyards, and varied business endeavors.

The community in which the school is located is largely white with a 7.2% black population and 5.8 % various ethnic groups such as Indian, Asian, Hispanic, and other, per the U. S. Bureau of the Census (1990). Most of the residents are home owners, with a median home value in the county of $170,200 per Office of Research and Statistics (1992). Resident occupations are mainly professional and service oriented positions with a median annual family income of $69,790 per Center for Public Service Income Projection (1992).

Students who attend the school come from this immediate community and an adjacent county that is somewhat more urban and diverse. The population of the nearby county is approximately 847,000, mostly white, with a 7.6% black population and 17.3% other ethnic makeup. There the median income is $60,000 and median house value is $212,000.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school was established in 1953 by a group of parents and community leaders who sought small classes and a core curriculum. The present site is an eight acre area in a residential neighborhood. The school consists of a one story brick building, a portable classroom and Headmaster's residence. The brick building has 14 classrooms, a library, computer lab, fieldhouse with stage, two resource rooms, administrative offices, athletic field, outdoor basketball court and playground. The portable unit has three classrooms.

There are 180 students, (114 primary and 66 middle or upper school) of average to higher abilities who are admitted through an application/interview process. There are 20 teachers, one class per grade, twelve are upper school and four instructional aides for the lower school classes.

Prior to 1990 a parent volunteer came to the library part time to process books, prepare overdue notices and shelve books. There were no organized library classes or programs. In 1990 the Parents' Association funded a project to renovate the library. The carpeted platforms of the old media center gave way to an enclosed, well-lighted area and attached computer lab.

A full-time librarian was hired in 1990. The writer launched a program for the library to be the center of school activity. Library classes, storytime, research, middle (also referred to as the upper school) electives, meetings and an array of special programs all take place in the library. The library is considered to be part of the 'enhanced' curriculum of the school. The overall mission of the library is to support and enrich the educational programs of the school by providing appropriate materials on a variety of interest, ability, and maturity

levels and to help students become intelligent users of the library through a planned program of instruction.

The primary role of the librarian is to develop and maintain an appropriate collection and conduct scheduled classes for prekindergarten through fifth grade, and provide research and information retrieval assistance for all students and teachers through on-line services consisting of communications software and modem to the county library system, CD-ROM and a networked Apple computer lab. In addition, the librarian is responsible for numerous programs throughout the year that promote the school and its commitment to reading and involving parents and the larger community in efforts to emphasize the joy and importance of literacy.

Moreover, it is the responsibility of the librarian to keep students and staff informed of library activities through a monthly report and new acquisitions listings. The librarian serves as liaison between the school and county library system. This includes providing information about activities of the five community libraries and working with the librarians and program coordinator in an effort to promote library services.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

There was a decline in middle school student (Grades 6,7,8) participation in and use of the school library resources and programs. The middle school students do not have regularly scheduled classes for library instruction as are held for prekindergarten through fifth grade. The middle school students have access to the library throughout the school day with homeroom or classroom teacher permission. The renovated space is adequate for additional students to be using the library, with sufficient tables and chairs to accommodate these students, while scheduled classes are taking place. The library is open daily before, during, and after school hours with the librarian, parent volunteer, and/or student library pages available for assistance.

Middle school students were not visiting the library on a regular basis to check out books. Occasionally a middle school teacher will bring a class to the library for a research assignment. Generally, the teacher has not conferred with the librarian as to the nature or topic of the assignment prior to the visit. Presently, it is left to the individual teachers to incorporate library skills and to utilize the resources in the middle school curriculum. Moreover, middle school students were not always attending special library programs during the year.

Despite a number of subtle efforts to encourage the 'magic' of reading to occur for the middle school, this had not happened since the writer became

librarian three years ago. Perhaps these efforts had not been aggressive enough, added to an already overcrowded master schedule and/or appeared more aligned with the primary grade curriculum. Efforts to include the middle school students previously in the library consisted of the following:

- Question of the Week-question posted outside the library each week that encourages the use of materials and reference skills; prizes awarded at end of year for top 10 participants
- Changing displays and themes to appeal to Young Adults(YA) with colorful posters, signs, mobiles, dust jackets from the current YA books acquired monthly
- Curious realia- a tangle of string reaching from school's front door, all the way to the library to advertise a Newbery award winner
- Active projects in process—making badges and bookworms during Book Week (curiously enough the middle school boys were the most in attendance during the entire week)
- Proposed and piloted electives, one for visiting the town library and one for the Young Authors' Competition
- Invitation to participate in the Library Page program- an opportunity to assist in the library
- Special events with YA appeal--Western Day, Technology Day, Hobbies Collections Month, Teacher-Student-Guess-Who-Baby- Picture and Favorite Childhood Book Contest

In conclusion, the middle school students had not been fully involved with the school library. The middle school student, teachers, and librarian were missing an important opportunity as team partners to use a rich available resource, to promote skills and appreciations for the information age.

Problem Documentation

A number of sources indicated the middle school library problem. Daily observations revealed that students in the middle school had not come to the library on a regular basis. They were observed occasionally taking a make-up test for a class, obtaining an article from the newspaper, and /or looking up the Question of the Week. Observations also indicated that students were not engaging in silent reading while in the library, but often preferred visiting with friends.

Circulation records were other means to document the problem. Tracking circulation for a three month period from 10-1-92 through 12-22-92 indicated that 49 books were checked out by middle school students. The average monthly circulation for the school including the primary school and teachers is approximately 400 books.

An informal survey conducted in September, 1992, asked half of the middle school teachers: Do you observe your students choosing reading as an activity during free time, study hall, waiting for the bus? Teachers reported that they rarely observed students choosing reading during free choice times during the school day. This was further validated when a "library" elective was proposed. The elective period is a special time on Friday afternoons when students take part

in a variety of classes during the trimester. Electives include such events as skiing, flying, running, debate, cooking, crafts and the like. A parent in charge of the Young Authors' Competition, an annual county juried event that promotes writing in a number of categories, suggested this elective period for working on the entries. None of the middle school students signed up.

The middle school schedule was another way to further document the problem. Despite study halls and the elective period for each of the Grades 6,7,8, no period is designated specifically for library use. With a full sports program, extensive fine arts program and the core curriculum, there is not a great deal of latitude for changes in this master schedule.

Parents are another source for problem documentation. When their children reach the sixth grade, parents express surprise that the children no longer have a library period. A number of the middle school parents have informally inquired about this in the past few years.

Finally, an important source to substantiate the decline of library use at the middle school level, was the recent self-study committee reports. These preliminary reports from the upper school curriculum committee, facilities committee, and resources committee, all noted a lack of library participation and inclusion of the library in the middle school curriculum. These reports expressed a need for more coordination between the library and the middle school curriculum.

Causative Analysis

Educators, librarians, and parents lament the decline in reading and reading activities as students reach early adolescence. The decline has a direct

effect on the participation and use of library resources and programs. Braught (1992) confirms the decline as a national concern. Yet, as Martin (1991) relates, adolescents themselves have difficulty expressing why they don't read. Causal factors in the local setting and through the available literature were identified to explain the decline. These include changes in the middle school curriculum as compared to the primary curriculum, developmental factors, the ubiquitous time-crunch, and lack of specific activities to interest and engage the middle school student.

The organization of the middle school curriculum often changes from self-contained classes in primary grades to departmentalization, block scheduling, team approaches, heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings across grade lines, and other combinations in the middle grades. The organization of the curriculum may suggest to the adolescent that it is, as Braught (1992) hints, no longer the time to learn to read, but time instead to rise to the occasion and read to learn. The T-shirt motto: " Just Do It " may seem to be the message being sent. Changes in reading habits at home and school may also contribute to the decline. Parents and teachers both may discontinue the practice of reading aloud to the student at this age. This aspect may diminish prime opportunities for sharing, discussing, and responding to books more fully. Too, there may be no actual time set aside in the curriculum or at home for "free" or recreational reading.

Certain developmental factors may also contribute to the decline in reading. Jongsma (1992) emphasizes the importance of addressing the unique needs of the adolescent for any middle school educational endeavor. Rapid changes that the adolescent is experiencing physically, emotionally, and intellectually may

impact upon his/her ability and motivation to respond to reading in the present system. Campbell (1991) relates the importance of understanding the middle schoolers new roles, search for identity, emphasis on peers, emotional swings and overall disorganization. These factors can add to the difficulty in promoting reading or any other area of study, if not acknowledged and considered in formulating goals and programs. Moreover, Gerler (1986) asserts. . . Adolescents' "feelings or their need to conform to others' expectations of them may be the most powerful factors in determining their behavior" (p.437). In essence, if their peers do not think it is "cool" to read, adolescents may give up the practice of reading in an effort to belong and fit in.

The time factor looms over the school day and the master schedule. In the local setting the eight period day is filled with a core curriculum, an extensive arts and athletic programs, and foreign language classes. A number of field trip opportunities throughout the school year also enhance the curriculum. The classes in the sixth, seventh and eight grade include substantial subject matter, with homework as an integral part of the lessons. Extra-curricular sports, piano, and ballet all fill in the time outside of school. Any number of other activities compete for the middle schoolers time such as television, computer, and visits to the malls with friends. It is no wonder then when asked why they don't read, the middle schoolers' response is: "there's no time and besides it's boring".

In other schools and within the local setting, the library may not be at the top of the hit parade for the middle school student, because there may not be specific activities on a regular basis that are of high interest to fully engage them. With regular classes taking place daily for the primary school, it may appear to

the middle school student, that activities in the library are now for the younger children and they have outgrown a place that appears to be for picture books and storytelling.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

There is an abundance of literature regarding children's reading. The literature that seeks to answer the whys and how of lifetime reading also abounds; Lesesne (1991) suggests thousands of articles in the past 50 years. It may be a comfort to a novice middle school practitioner (and parent) to know that the struggle with the specific problem of early adolescent decline in reading and reading activities exists across the country and has for some time. This is not to say that the mere knowing of the "same cry among many" is sufficient to lessen efforts to remedy the problem. Perhaps it can lessen the fears of the impact of failed tries to correct the problem.

Rather the literature seeks to say to educators and parents alike: "Take Heart, Keep Going, but Listen to What We Already Know." Evidence of the problem is described in many a school setting, city and rural, public and private, each with its own special variation of the problem: middle school students are not choosing to read and make use of the library resources available at school. Martin (1991) dares to suggest that some of these children really are readers, but read outside of school and select their own books, which may not be on the school-teacher-parent-must-read-list. Wilson (1992) recounts an incident of observing a reluctant reader absorbed in reading Stephen King's Cujo, and realizing that the student's friends got him to do what the teacher had not been able to accomplish.

It took the student's peers to get him into the real-life world of reading. McCoy, Larson, and Higginson (1991) report that despite the decline in the middle school student reading, their surveys suggest that 75% of the students still relate they enjoy recreational reading.

Common threads throughout the readings denote the importance of continued efforts to encourage reading and reading activities because of the overall significance of reading in school and life. Tests and more tests, surveys, questionnaires all have shown that at various ages the more reading done, the better readers emerge. Studies indicate the correlation between the time spent in reading and reading achievement, improved comprehension, vocabulary, and overall fluency. Too, the literature emphasizes that students must have time to read, space to read, and good reader models coupled with encouragement. Otherwise, there is the flip side that McCoy et al. (1991) describe as low reading proficiencies at the college level that surveys indicate stem directly from the decline in reading at the seventh and eight grade levels. Wilson (1992) and others highlight the keys to consider for the early adolescent: interests, needs, and pleasures, all the same factors that propel real readers to read in the real world.

In examining the problem from a number of vantage points, the literature urges a systematic approach but not one that is "mechanical". The premise is that reading must be viewed as a process not just a product. Both Chall (1989) and Larrick (1987) suggest that decline in reading may occur when elements of enjoyment and love are missing. Larrick further asserts that the student must be won over with literature that..."sharpens the intellect... and stirs the soul" (p. 187).

In conclusion, research findings relate a number of causes. None imply a quick-fix or that all may fit every situation. Using the findings and applying them in effective plans that are most appropriate is a skillful task. Like others, Wilmore (1992) cautions that middle schoolers "do not respond well to old-fashioned bureaucracy" (p.31). The evidence has shown that as educators, we cannot force but we can try to inspire the students. It is recognized that often despite a good foundation in reading and even though students loved their books in early childhood, decline in reading at the early adolescent stage is very real and poses a continued challenge for educators and parents.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to increase middle school student participation in and use of library resources and programs with the assistance of the librarian. With a variety of opportunities for involvement and participation, middle school students were more visible in library activities. Middle school students were encouraged to read more and the habit of reading was promoted (see Appendix A).

Expected Outcomes

It was anticipated that during and after the practicum implementation the middle school use and participation would be evident in the school library. The middle school students were involved in more activities with a variety of purposes and programs. The rationale for this undertaking is the importance of reading in our lives and that reading be promoted. Chall (1989) recognizes that the "ability to read well is basic to our national survival" (p.521).

Expected outcomes for the three month practicum implementation period included:

- increased circulation with approximately 75 books being checked out by middle school students with the assistance of the librarian following BookTalks, Read Aloud sessions, and special programs and activities

- middle school students would select a variety of books made available in the classes and displayed in the library every week for eight sessions following BookTalks, Read Alouds
- ten middle school students would come to the library to plan, prepare, and read to the kindergarten class every Thursday for about one half hour for 12 weeks.
- ten middle school student volunteers would rekindle the excitement of childhood favorites by reading aloud to the kindergarten class
- all middle school students would take part in three special programs in the library that coordinate with class studies such as British Culture Day, French Day, and Read Aloud Day
- middle school students would participate in library activities and serve as guides during these special days and describe aspects of their class studies for other classes that come to the library throughout the day

Measurement of Outcomes

The circulation was tracked on a daily basis by the librarian at the close of each day. This was accomplished by hand carding because there is not an electronic check-out system. The daily tally was kept in a circulation notebook at the check out desk. The figures were kept separately for both the primary and middle school. The tracking included a written account of: student, grade, and title of book for the middle school students. Student library pages and parent volunteers were instructed to leave the book cards signed out each day in the circulation box, and the librarian recorded and filed the cards at the end of each

day in the appropriate file. The records were kept all three months during practicum implementation. Three month totals were obtained by consulting the tracking which was kept in the circulation notebook.

In addition to tracking circulation, middle school student participation in library activities were recorded. The activities were recorded in the Library Album, a medium kept faithfully for the past three years that visually and verbally captures major library events. The outcomes of these practicum activities were recorded with a short narrative, student reactions, and photographs each week. This method of recording outcomes also served for the three major programs related to the upper school curriculum that took place in the library.

The classroom visits by the librarian every week for the three month period were included in a Practicum/BookTalk journal. It was anticipated that these visits would be directly related to library circulation. Students and teachers were asked to contribute memorable quotes and moments during this time, along with ideas, reactions, suggestions, comments, and feelings.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

Unexpected events and changes were noted in the Practicum/ BookTalk journal. Changes in events and plans were included in narrative form. In addition, provisions were made for schedule changes by setting alternate dates within the Calendar Plan. Also, the circulation tally was photocopied each day, and those pages kept in a practicum folder in the librarian's office, in the event the circulation notebook was misplaced or lost.

Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

The circulation data was analyzed according to the three grades, sixth, seventh, and eighth and according to book category, fiction, and nonfiction. The before and after implementation figure totals were graphed for comparison. Analyzing other activities and programs took the form of gathering, collating, and reviewing student and teacher reactions and comments from the Practicum/ BookTalk journal in a narrative form in the discussion of the practicum.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

There was a decline in middle school student use of and participation in library resources and programs. The students were not checking out books on a regular basis and were not reading during "free" periods. Reading skills and pleasures have been the subject of innumerable studies, surveys, questionnaires, entire conferences and more for many years.

The literature outlines on-going efforts in this important area of many educators and administrators who attempt to remedy the situation. There are convincing accounts of success throughout the country using a number of strategies. Education journals are full of suggestions, activities, ideas at all levels, as well as for the middle school. Figure 1 outlines some of the recurring strategies, the names of which suggest the nature of the approach.

- Round Table Discussion
- Partner Reading
- Reading Circles
- Discussion Clubs
- Reading Laboratories
- Book Chats
- Reading Aloud
- Armchair Adventure Club
- Listen and Read
- Free-Choice Reads
- Think-Aloud Reading
- Read and Dramatize
- Programming
- Reading Workshops
- Trade not Basal Reading
- Paper Back Clubs
- Library Field Trips
- Community Service Reading

Figure 1. Middle school strategies to encourage reading

These have been reasonable attempts to encourage reading in middle school settings with adaptations to fit specific circumstances. The strategies are described in journals, papers, studies, and conference minutes over a number of years. Shefelbine (1990) warns that " we cannot force kids to be motivated but we can encourage them" (p.4). In addition, reports indicate that consideration must be given to the middle schoolers' needs and interests in choosing any strategies for middle school instruction or programs. Middle school considerations for encouraging reading and other instruction are summarized in Figure 2.

- Employ cooperative learning
- Provide electives
- Use thematic approaches
- Use cross-age tutoring
- Use an active rather lecture format
- Be flexible
- Promote interdisciplinary efforts
- Use real-life material, questions, projects
- Trust and believe in the success of the students

Figure 2. Middle school considerations for instruction

These approaches may not spell automatic success every time, but as Nelms (1991) reports, adapting to middle school needs and interests does result in favorable response to many such strategies.

In thinking about each of these strategies and considerations for the local setting, and keeping in mind the prior attempts to remedy the problem, three main solutions were included for the present practicum.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The three main solutions/ideas that were employed to remedy the decline in middle school use of and participation in the library were: BookTalks and reading aloud, providing a service project, and special programming designed to coordinate with the middle school curriculum. The approaches were believed to be reasonable to accomplish within the confines of the present schedule, with teacher cooperation, and the choices not in conflict with students' other activities. These ideas attempted to address the needs of the students in terms of active participation, time to be with their peers, and using thematic and interdisciplinary approaches.

It was expected that library circulation would increase as a result of the librarian visiting each of the grades, six, seven and eight every other week for three months. The strategies of BookTalks and reading aloud would be complimented by working with the individual teachers , county children's librarian, and a willing parent, all of whom shared BookTalks and reading aloud with the school librarian. Barban (1991) extols the BookTalk even though the adolescents..."may be looking out the window or passing notes,...at the end of the

booktalk session they clamor for copies of the books" (p.106). Barban further praises the BookTalk because it encourages the middle schooler to read, go to the library, and in some cases be willing to form discussion groups (see Appendix B). These BookTalk sessions for the practicum also included reading aloud to the students. This was one way that the teacher and librarian could be good role models and show by example that reading is an important and valuable activity. Others like Sullivan (1991) report reading aloud to students with "amazing" results. Ecroyd (1991) uses oral reading as a motivation and a way to set a calm, sharing atmosphere in the class. Another solution was that of providing a service project for middle schoolers during a free choice period. Each of the ten middle school students were to be paired with two kindergarten students and read to the younger students in the library for a period of about one half an hour one day a week for the three month period. The middle school students were with their peers in an active format. It was hoped that sharing some of the old favorites would revive warm memories of their own childhood and sense the admiration of the younger children. Including "service" is one of the essential elements listed by the National Middle Schools Association (see Appendix C).

Finally, the use of programming was an important part of this practicum. The premise was that a library without special programs is merely a storehouse for books. Programs make libraries come alive. Research studies in the U.S. Department of Education, What Works, indicate that..."participating in library programs reinforces children's skills and interest in reading" (p.60). Sullivan (1991) hints that perhaps even teachers do not fully utilize the resources of the library. For this practicum through special programs,

interdisciplinary efforts were strengthened with the librarian working with a variety of teachers for three special events during the three month implementation period. This provided a theme approach, an active format, team cooperation and real-life projects (see Appendix D).

Raymer (1992) believes programming can make a difference in improving middle schoolers' reading habits. Moreover, Raymer contends it is a must to direct great efforts for this age group because it is the crucial juncture for preventing the decline in reading as affirmed by many a survey and study.

Report of Action Taken

The Calendar Plan for the three month implementation period covered three distinct strategies:

1. **BookTalks** (and Read Alouds)
2. three **special programs** (British Culture Day, French Day, and Read Aloud Day)
3. a **service project** in which middle school students read to kindergarten students

The **BookTalks** (and Read Alouds) took place every week for the twelve week period in each of the three grades in the middle school (Grades 6, 7, and 8) (see Appendix E). The books included a variety of fiction and non-fiction, with a number of popular YA authors featured (see Appendix F) . The BookTalks were given by the school librarian, a county librarian and a parent volunteer during the implementation period.

Three **special programs** took place during the three month implementation period. These programs reflected areas of study in the middle school curriculum and provided an opportunity for the students to be in the library and share study activities and information with the rest of the school (see Appendix G and H).

Finally, the **service project** took place every Thursday morning for about one half hour throughout the three month period. During this time twelve middle school volunteers came to the library and with the librarian's assistance planned, prepared, and read to the children in the kindergarten class. Each session had a general theme or direction such as Dr. Seuss Day, plants, or poetry (see Appendix

I). The librarian assumed the role of facilitator, guide, and recorder. This included:

- set general guidelines for both groups
- posted weekly topic, keeping flexible
- assisted students to and from class to library and back to class
- gathered and displayed books and materials as needed
- circulated during activity; provided help with materials and children

The overall calendar appeared as follows:

BOOK TALKS:

Every week to equal twelve sessions total

March, April, May, and June

PROGRAMS:

Total three programs

British Culture Day, French Day, Read Aloud Day

SERVICE PROJECT:

Every Thursday morning for **12 sessions**

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

There was a decline in middle school students' (sixth, seventh, eight graders') participation in library programs and using library resources in the independent school setting. The students were not regularly checking out books or actively involved in previous library programs. Through strategies of BookTalks, Read Alouds, a special service project, and three all-school interdisciplinary programs, middle school students were participating more fully and checking out more books during the three month practicum implementation period.

As a result of the practicum interventions, there were favorable results in middle school participation as well as increased book circulation. Expectations were met and in some cases exceeded:

- Circulation increased during the three month period of implementation.

Prior to the practicum, 49 books were checked out by middle school students over a three month period. During the practicum, 116 books were checked out by middle school students during three months. It was anticipated that students would check out 75 books during the practicum.

- Middle school students did come to the library and select books that had been reviewed or read loud.
- Twelve middle school students came to the library to read to the kindergartners. It had been anticipated that ten would participate .

- Middle school students revealed in their written comments that reading to the little ones was an enjoyable experience.
- All middle school students took part in the three programs in the library, either in the planning, implementation of activities and/or attending the events.
- Middle school students served as guides during these events and were willing to describe aspects of class studies for the other students.

Also, two teachers approved the librarian's visits to their middle school classes every week for twelve weeks. It was anticipated that four teachers would participate. However, it was possible to include all three grades, sixth, seventh, and eight in this arrangement with two teachers.

During the practicum period of twelve weeks middle school students checked out 116 books, compared to the total of 49 books checked out by middle school students in a previous twelve week period. Those figures are summarized in the graph in Figure 3 below:

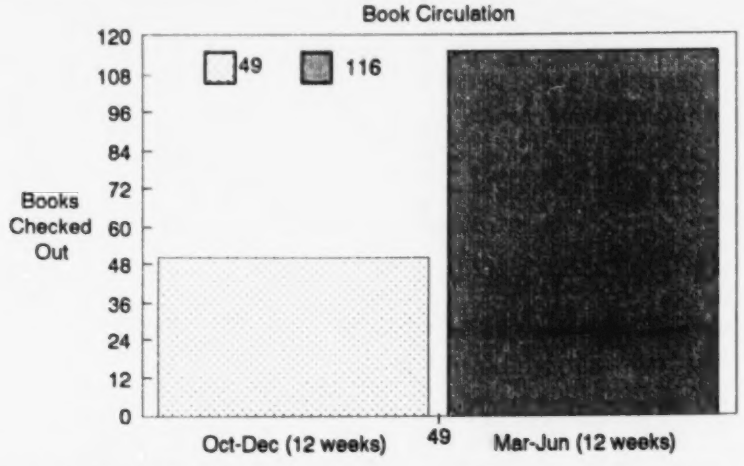

Figure 3. Circulation before and after practicum implementation.

Other tracked data includes:

- 48 out of the total 66 middle school students at the school checked out books
- one middle school student checked out 15 books in twelve weeks
- 5 middle school students checked out 5 or more books
- 42 middle school students checked out less than 5 books
- 18 middle school students did not check out books during the practicum implementation
- Prior to the practicum there was an average of 16.3 books checked out per month
- During the practicum the average number of books checked out per month was 38.6

Discussion

"At the start of this class, I didn't want to [read to the kindergartners] but after awhile it seemed like they grew on me".

Seventh grade participant in the service project

The practicum was an eventful, rewarding undertaking. The various interventions and events were favorably received and given generous praise by teachers, parents, and visiting librarian. Meeting expectations such as increasing book circulation and middle school participation in the library was important, but the sense of cooperation and appreciation and positive attitudes were especially gratifying. That quality is highlighted in Sizer's (1973) observation, "Education is as much concerned with the spirit as with the mind" (p. ix).

BookTalks/Read Alouds made for lively exchanges and opportunities to get to know the students and be more connected to the students' classroom activities. Following the first week of BookTalks/Read Alouds, the teachers and librarian decided to hold the sessions every week. It seemed that to do it every other week would fragment interest and momentum. After the first few weeks, when the librarian would appear in the classes, the students seemed visibly eager for the sessions to begin. Observing the students interacting with other presenters (parent and county librarian) was beneficial. This provided a glimpse of their "activity" as they listened to the reviews and readings. They may not have had hands folded and eyes straight ahead, but as Barban (1991) predicted they were eager for the books afterwards. The students' questions and comments about the books and authors were peppy and thoughtful. One student was courageous enough to ask in earnest while discussing the story of the Titanic, "Why was it wrong for the men to want to live so bad that they dressed up like women and got on the life boats?"

The props that accompanied the BookTalks and Read Alouds created an air of added interest. A common question was, "What's in that basket today?" Depending on the books or topics of the session, various props included hints of the story or theme to come: ice cubes, actual ocean liner china, Velcro® fasteners, posters, ice cream cone, Post-it™ notes, silly putty and more. The day the county librarian visited was made more festive with button cookies (shaped and marked like buttons) and iced tea served in a clear fancy pitcher showing off ice cubes with frozen pansies. Those ideas were gathered from a current Martha Stewart (1993) magazine with a sign carried in on the silver tray: It's fun to read and do!

The twelve students came faithfully to the library each Thursday morning to read to the kindergarten class, for the service project. Middle school students read in pairs or small groups in a busy, animated period. Also, during that time middle schoolers assisted with reading-related projects such as making bookmarks, hats, spring ornaments, and paper folding. Toward the end of the twelve weeks, the middle school students were asked to jot down an anonymous sentence or two about their reactions to the project. From the comments it was apparent that the students learned about themselves and viewed themselves differently in the teaching-learning process. They became more aware of others' feelings and appreciated that it wasn't always easy to maintain a child's attention and interest! Kindergartners' verbal comments were more basic, displaying a sense of pleasure and realizing that the older students enjoyed the project as much as they did. A sampling of kindergartners' comments include: "They like to read and I like to listen." I like when [he] talked to me and told me the jokes the best. I liked when we sat under the table and [he] read to me in the funny voice." The service project was an opportunity that evidenced self consciousness giving way to responsiveness and caring. It further confirmed Campbell's (1991) premise that success with adolescents can be met in providing time for service, time with peers within informal settings.

All middle school students were involved in one way or another for the three special programs, British Culture Day, French Day, and Read Aloud Day. They were part of the planning process, suggested activities and events, and were active participants on the day of the event.

British Culture Day was an event that featured the sights, sounds, foods, and literature of the British Isles. Comments from the Library Monthly Newsletter state: The entire school was enchanted with the bagpiper and feasted on scones,jams, marmalades, shortbread and more. Tables were filled with British items contributed by the British Embassy, students, parents, teachers, and friends to inform of life in Britain. Two teachers hosted a fish and chips lunch, catered by Long John Silvers. Middle school students were instrumental in presenting Guy Fawkes in a wagon complete with a script describing his history. The students generated a print-out on Britain and located British music on the CD-ROM. Another student brought in an English riding saddle, habit and video of the Queen and her horses. The library was bedecked with books, flags, banners, maps, pictures, posters, and family coat of arms. The middle school students were proud of their efforts and spoke enthusiastically even during clean up. When excellence is expected from students, it is generally forthcoming (Barth, 1990).

The French Day and Read Aloud Day were other positive events in the practicum experience. These special days provided still more opportunities for the students to take active roles in the library, be with their peers, and be involved with the pleasures of reading and reading experiences.

An unanticipated outcome was the invitation extended to the librarian to visit classrooms at additional times for other class activities. This was a welcome change for the librarian, especially to have students take an interest in explaining other projects and to witness these delights in learning. In addition, it was somewhat easier to work with the schedule than had first been anticipated. The participating teachers went to great lengths to reschedule when a change was

necessary. The generous collaboration with colleagues surpassed expectations. One teacher remarked about helping with the service project, "The reaction of the students encouraged me, and reminded me why I became a teacher." Also, the prekindergarten teacher asked at the close of the program if the reading service project event could be set up for her class for the coming year. Furthermore, that teacher and librarian have now written a grant proposal together that incorporates the service project as a core component of the grant.

The success of these strategies indicate that with an organized plan, taking into consideration what others have tried, and addressing the essential needs of adolescents, it is possible to reach out to the middle school student and reap benefits in reading and reading-related activities. Reactions and participation during the various BookTalks/Read Alouds, demonstrated that middle schoolers are curious and eager to learn about the past and thinking of the future in a combined format of observing, listening, reading, and doing. That wonderful curiosity can be channeled to the reading medium with books, stimulating questioning, and actual objects that arouse thinking. These experiences demonstrate that middle school students are capable and willing to be part of the planning process of their own learning. Moreover, students are responsive to young adult books that are introduced to them through book talks and reading aloud. Involving others in the process of encouraging middle schoolers to read, adds interest and shows students that other adults care enough to give freely of their time for something as important as reading. The responses, questions, and discussions that followed many of the sessions, made it clear that other people share their feelings, family situations, and that all this is available in

the printed word, just for the taking. Some before and after-school discussions about the reviewed books, confirm Chall's (1989) and Larrick's(1987) conviction that when the elements of enjoyment and zest are present students will read. Increased circulation confirms McCoy et al. (1991) that adolescents do enjoy reading. Finally, none of these strategies are magic, although some magic moments may have occurred. It suggests that there are no short cuts to success with middle school efforts. Successful programs and interventions require time, energy, and lots of hard work. The programs will not happen on their own. The students cannot be expected to be part of the process unless a deliberate attempt is made to include them in an organized and flexible way. Setting the plan in motion, allowing the students to take active roles, trusting that they will follow through, may produce great ideas and great opportunities for reading.

Recommendations

In order to stave off the decline of middle school use of library resources and programs, this practicum detailed a variety of possibilities to be implemented, taking into consideration adolescents' needs, interests, and development. It is recommended that these activities continue in some appropriate form by refining and adapting them to the needs and schedule of upcoming classes. Providing there is no conflict with the schedule, or competition with other activities there is reason to believe that reading can continue to be promoted. Interest in the BookTalks/ Read Alouds would justify their continuation. If the schedule permits, they could be included in all classes for short periods and in keeping with the curriculum. The librarian could also offer BookTalks/ Read Alouds during lunch

on special or rainy days. Because there was a decided increase in circulation during the practicum implementation, it is important to provide some of the same opportunities for the middle school students, especially since they do not have a set time to come to the library. Another recommendation is to make the service project available for the big brother/sister program by offering the library as a place to hold the sessions.

Dissemination

Dissemination of the practicum includes sharing the implementation experiences with colleagues and participating teachers. A brief description was given at a final faculty meeting, and participating teachers were acknowledged and thanked. Several of the English teachers have requested information and expressed an interest in continuing Book/Talks for their classes in the coming year. As aforementioned, part of the practicum strategy has been included in a recent grant proposal. Finally, plans are underway to make the report available to other school librarians, county librarians, and for the program director in the local county library system. It is important to widen the circle of information when successful efforts may benefit our youth.

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APPENDIX A

PRACTICUM GOALS AND

ANCILLARY GOALS AND APPRECIATIONS

Appendix A

Practicum Goals and Ancillary Goals and Appreciations

Primary Goals:

- To increase middle school student use of and participation in library resources and programs
- To promote reading

Ancillary Goals and Appreciations:

- To promote lifelong reading
- To promote recreational reading
- To promote effective use of the library
- To promote teacher and librarian interdisciplinary efforts
- To encourage middle school students to read willingly
- To encourage the students to talk with others about reading
- To encourage connections between books and real-life
- To view the library not only as a source of information, but also as a genuine source of pleasure

APPENDIX B

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR BOOKTALKS/READ ALOUD

Appendix B

Goals and Objectives for Booktalks/Read Aloud

Goal: To share pleasures of reading through real-life drama, information, and humor

Goal: To encourage independent, recreational reading

Objective: To introduce a variety of authors and sources of information

Objective: To make other reading models and approaches available

Objective: To emphasize the wealth of library resources

APPENDIX C

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

FOR

SERVICE PROJECT

Appendix C

Goals and Objectives for Service Project

Goal: To provide opportunities for service

Goal: To provide time to participate in library activity

Goal: To provide cross-age activities that promote reading

Objective: To revive the joys of reading through childhood favorites and reading aloud to younger children

Objective: To provide time with peers in a comfortable, useful way

Objective: To establish a forum for success in a reading setting

APPENDIX D

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

FOR PROGRAMMING

Appendix D

Goals and Objectives for Programming

Goal: To involve the middle school student in an active format in the library

Goal: To encourage interdisciplinary efforts among teachers

Goal: To promote literacy and the appreciation of literature, both fiction and non-fiction

Objective: Involve the entire school in special events that relate to the curriculum and library resources

Objective: To generate interest in the library as center of school activity

APPENDIX E

LESSON PLAN FORMAT

FOR BOOKTALKS

Appendix E

Lesson Plan Format for Booktalks

A. Aims

List of goals, purposes (may include concepts, skills, appreciations or attitudes)

B. Mechanics

Physical setting- location , activity, seating arrangement

Leadership- roles and responsibilities

Materials- what used and method of distribution

C. Motivation- means, methods for creating interest

D. Procedure

Outline of presentation

E. Summary

Conclusion and any follow-up

F. Evaluation

Learnings in relation to aims of lesson

Go over each point above for effectiveness

Suggestions for subsequent lessons

APPENDIX F

CALENDAR PLANS

FOR BOOKTALKS/READ ALOUDS

Appendix F

Calendar Plan for BookTalks/Read Alouds

SESSION: (For sixth, seventh and eight grades, unless otherwise noted)

WEEK1. Introductory Session: explanation of program and sampling of things to come

2. Gary Paulsen: introduce author and examples of works
3. Gary Paulsen continued: Reading aloud excerpts, discussion
4. Jerry Spinelli: introduce author via Book Magic video
5. Jerry Spinelli: read aloud from Space Station Seventh Grade

NOTE: Eighth grade: The Children's Story , by Clavel

6. Joan Aiken: introduce British author to correlate with special program; share sections of The Wolves of Willoughby Chase and The Moon's Revenge
7. Inventions: Mistakes That Worked by Jones; provide objects for discussion and thinking
8. Persian stories presented by parent from Iran; read aloud from Behrangi's The Little Black Fish

NOTE: Eighth grade: reading a classmate's winning essay from Young Authors competition

9. County librarian: sharing play on words, poetry, non fiction
10. Future Stuff by Abrams and Bernstein

11. Views of the Titanic: A Night to Remember by Lord and Ballard's Exploring the Titanic

12. An update on the Eurotunnel by Bender

APPENDIX G

GENERAL ACTION PLAN

FOR LIBRARY PROGRAMS

APPENDIX G

General Action Plan for Library Programs

The following points served as a general guide for the organization and planning for the practicum's special programs held in the library.

- Make a folder for all planning materials
- Meet with program partners (teachers, parents, friends, students)
- Establish flexible goals and expectations; specify roles
- Call or FAX press release of program to local papers
- Make a list of equipment needed to implement (purchase or borrow)
- Plan schedule (consider school's master schedule)
- Telephone or write potential participants
- Visit or write local resources for posters etc. (travel agencies, other)
- Set up additional planning times for partners
- Make note of and gather appropriate library materials
- Purchase 'tokens of appreciation' for participants
- Finalize schedule, print and post

APPENDIX H

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

British Culture Day

Description: British literature is a major area of study in one of the eighth grade classes. British Culture Day was a way to culminate the year study and prepare for the "My Word" program, another aspect of class study. British Culture Day was a day to learn, share, and experience more about British authors, poets, artists, customs, and food.

Implementation: The school library was set up to host all the school and share people, activities both past and present, customs, food, and more that reflect British Culture. The librarian collaborated with the English teacher to arrange guests, events, and assisted with scheduling, and displayed appropriate materials from the collection. The eighth grade students were responsible for sharing their year's literary work and study and hosted other classes as they were invited through the library for the event.

French Day

Description: French culture and language instruction is an integral part of the school. French Day was a day to bring the study of French into the reality of the real-world. The goal was to broaden students' horizons, make them more aware of how widespread this language is, and to reinvigorate French studies.

Implementation: French Day took place in the school library with the French teacher and the librarian coordinating a variety of events. An exhibition of French-related materials, guest speakers, audio and video tapes, slides, posters, and library books were available. This was an opportunity to involve community resources as well as parents and native French speakers. The librarian worked with the French teacher to coordinate the schedule, obtained speakers, and parents. The librarian was available throughout the day to welcome guests and assisted the French teacher as needed for set up, coordinating the presentations, and changing of classes.

Read Aloud Day

Description: Read Aloud Day was an opportunity for students to participate in a pro literacy event emphasizing favorite books, and sharing how reading is part of peoples' lives and success. The all day event featured guest readers, authors, students, faculty, and staff.

Implementation: Every grade visited the library some time during the day. A schedule was set to allow each presenter about 15-20 minutes to share and interact with the students. The program featured students, the Headmaster and Assistant Headmaster, a female police officer, minister of music and storyteller, business and community leaders, an artist, and parents all willing to share talents and love of reading. It was an opportunity to celebrate libraries and reading, involve the community in the process of education, provide additional role models, and emphasize real-life skills and the benefits and pleasures of reading.

APPENDIX I

CALENDAR PLAN FOR SERVICE PROJECT

APPENDIX I

Calendar Plan For Service Project

Session:

Week

1. Middle school student selection, establish setting for the project, guidelines; go through sample reading with suggestions, answer questions, and practice, using some "old favorites" from the collection. Students to bring a favorite from home for next week.

2. Pair/group students, make group announcement about program, sharing. Middle schoolers share their favorite from home.

3. Select books from display (humor and rhymes)

4. Select on their own, make bookmarks. Bring teddy bears from home.

5. Select bear story and share teddies together.

6. Choose a nonfiction from shelf or display. Share pop-up books.

7. Read stories about spring to coordinate with class trip to greenhouse. Make spring ornaments.

8. Free choice session including coloring and paper folding projects.

9. Celebrate Dr. Seuss Day

10. Celebrate Poetry, riddles and jokes Day

11. Choose favorites to read or choose from display (dinosaurs)

12. Revisit favorite and share original handmade books from fourth and fifth grade students. Take final pictures.